



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/704,638	11/01/2000	Eric W. Doerr	06576-105027 (MS#150521.1)	4500
45979	7590	10/03/2005	EXAMINER	
PERKINS COLE LLP/MSFT P. O. BOX 1247 SEATTLE, WA 98111-1247			JARRETT, SCOTT L	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3623	

DATE MAILED: 10/03/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/704,638

Applicant(s)

DOERR ET AL.

Examiner

Scott L. Jarrett

Art Unit

3623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 January 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-37 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-37 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 01 November 2000 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Title

1. The title of the invention is not descriptive. A new title is required that is clearly indicative of the invention to which the claims are directed.

The following title is suggested: Method and System for Visually Indicating Project Task Durations Are Estimated Using a Character.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

2. Claims 17-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

The basis of this rejection is set forth in a two-prong test of:

- (1) whether the invention is within the technological arts; and
- (2) whether the invention produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

For a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must be within the technological arts. Mere ideas in the abstract (i.e., abstract idea, law of nature, natural phenomena) that do not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts fail to promote the "progress of science and the useful arts" (i.e., the physical sciences as opposed to social sciences, for example) and therefore are found to be non-statutory subject matter. For a process claim to pass muster, the recited process must somehow apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts.

Additionally, for a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

Regarding Claims 17-24, Claims 17-24 only recite an abstract idea. The recited method for specifying durations does not apply, involve, use or advance the technological arts since all of the recited steps can be performed in the mind of the user or by use of a pencil and paper. The claimed invention, as a whole, is not within the technological art as explained above claims 17-24 are deemed to be directed to non-statutory subject matter.

Examiner suggests that the applicant incorporate into Claims 17-24 language that the proposed method is a computer-implemented (computerized) method and that at least one of the method steps is implemented by a computer to overcome this rejection.

Correction required. See MPEP § 2106 [R-2].

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 14 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Regarding Claim 14, Claim 14 recites the limitation "have new **tasks** have" in Claim 4. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Regarding Claim 16, Claim 16 recites the limitation "designating a summary level **task**" in Claim 4. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

6. Claims 1, 17, 25-27 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Microsoft Project 2000 for Windows Product Enhancement Guide (October 1999).

Regarding Claim 1, 17, 25-27 and 33 Microsoft Project 2000 for Windows Product Enhancement Guide, herein after MS Project 2000 PEG, teaches a the sixth version of Microsoft's project management system and method (Page 1) that enables project managers (users) to plan, communicate and collaborate with project team members (Pages 1-3, 8).

More specifically MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a system and method for indicating (displaying, presenting, providing, etc.) a duration (time period, length, effort, work, time, task, activity, etc.) is estimated (forecasted, expected, predicted, original, tentative, unconfirmed, unsure, uncertain, variable, etc.) comprising ("Estimated Durations", Row 11, Page 4; "Estimated Durations", Paragraph 1, Page 24):

- receiving a task/activity duration (text, string, input, value, parameter, etc.) via a user interface that indicates the time period (week, day, year, hour, etc.) and if the duration is an estimate ("Users can indicate that the duration of a given task is tentative

Art Unit: 3623

by simply entering the duration followed by a "?" and return to the task at a later time to enter a confirmed duration.", Row 11, Page 4; "Estimated Durations", Page 24);

- storing the duration value (string, text, parameter, etc.; "Database Performance", Page 30-31; "The schema change from Microsoft Project 98 to Microsoft Project 2000", Figure 37); and

- displaying (showing, providing, etc.) the duration value (string, text, character) via a display ("...quick visual scan for question marks in the duration column.", Paragraph 1, Page 24; Figure 10, Task/Activity 34).

MS Project 2000 PEG inherently teaches separating (parsing, tokenizing, etc.) the entered (inputted, submitted, etc.) duration string in the system's ability to accept user entered duration strings (e.g. 3d, 3mo?, 3 month; Page 24) wherein the system/method parses (separates) the user input (entered data) in order to identify, store and display the individual project task duration parameters entered.

MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches the utilization of well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Paragraph 2, Page 21; Figure 8) and other project data via dialog windows (dialog mode; Figures 8, 11-12, 15, 17) and/or sheet windows (sheet mode; Figures 9-10, 13-14, 16, 20-21, 26a) containing text fields, radio buttons (typically representing Boolean values/parameters), checkboxes, flags (Paragraph 1, Page 23), pull-down menus and the like.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claim 2-16, 18-24, 28-32 and 34-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Microsoft Project 2000 for Windows Product Enhancement Guide (MS Project 2000 PEG, October 1999) as applied to claims 1, 17, 25-27 and 33 above.

Regarding Claims 2-3 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein the duration further comprises:

- an internal value (Row 11, Page 4; Paragraph 1, Page 24); and
- storing in memory (storage, location, file, database, etc.) the estimated duration ("Database Performance", Page 30-31; "The schema change from Microsoft Project 98 to Microsoft Project 2000", Figure 37).

MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches the utilization of well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Page 21 Figure 8) and other project data via dialog (dialog mode; Figures 8, 11-12, 15, 17) and/or sheet windows (sheet mode; Figures 9-10, 13-14, 16, 20-21, 26a) containing text fields, radio buttons (typically representing

Boolean values/parameters), checkboxes, flags (Paragraph 1, Page 23), pull-down menus and the like.

MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach that the duration string (text, input, etc.) includes display type and/or a flag for indicating that the estimated duration character is to be displayed as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts and/or hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean expressions/logic (variables) to “flag” information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well known.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive, store and display estimated project task durations as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark,

Art Unit: 3623

indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.) in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Further it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from enabling users to set/control how the estimated project tasks durations are to be displayed (display type) in view of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to customize/optimize the display of estimated project task durations to best suite their needs/preferences.

Regarding Claim 4 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a system and method for indicating that a time period (duration, length, etc.) is estimated by displaying (visually indicating, presenting, providing, etc.) an estimated duration character (text, symbol, icon, string, etc.) comprising:

- determining an input mode (dialog windows/mode; Figures 8, 11-12, 15, 17; sheet windows/mode; Figures 9-10, 13-14, 16, 20-21, 26a; Figures 4-6, Pages 12-13);
- enabling users to enter a duration value and estimated (tentative) duration character (string, text, symbol, etc.) into a field (box, input, form, dialog, etc.) for holding (storing, saving, etc.) or checking the information ("Estimated Durations", Row 11, Page 4; "Estimated Durations", Page 24); and

- displaying the estimate duration character (screen, field, box, sheet mode, dialog mode, etc.; "Estimated Durations", Row 11, Page 4; "Estimated Durations", Page 24).

While MS Project 2000 PEG teaches that the project management system and method utilizes a plurality of standard and customizable views (views, sheets, screens, etc.) including sheet and dialog modes that enable the user to interact (enter, edit, view, present, print, etc.) with the plurality of project task information MS Project 2000 PEG is silent on the mechanism the disclosed system utilizes to determine what mode (view, screen, etc.) the user is using to enter or subsequently what fields are used in those modes to enter the estimated duration data; however, these differences are only found in the non-functional descriptive material and are not functionally involved in the steps recited nor do they alter the recited structural elements. The recited method steps would be performed the same regardless of the specific modes and/or fields are utilized by the user to enter the duration data. Further, the structural elements remain the same regardless of the specific layout of the modes. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, see *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994); MPEP 2106.

Regarding Claims 5-6 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method utilizes a plurality of well-known and widely utilized user event triggers (mouse, keyboard, etc.) that enable users to navigate (e.g. switch views, resource view, Gantt view, etc.; Pages 12-14) and interact with the project management data ("adaptive menus", Page 26; "In-Cell Editing", Page 27).

While MS Project 2000 PEG teaches that the project management system and method utilizes a plurality of standard and customizable views (views, sheets, screens, etc.) that enable the user to interact (enter, edit, view, present, print, etc.) with the project task information MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach the determining the mode (view) of the system by moving a cursor to a field and clicking the mouse as claimed; however, these differences are only found in the non-functional descriptive material and are not functionally involved in the steps recited nor do they alter the recited structural elements. The recited method steps would be performed the same regardless of the specific user input/event sequence utilized to access/navigate the system. Further, the structural elements remain the same regardless of the specific user input/event sequence utilized to access/navigate the system. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, see *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994); MPEP 2106.

Regarding Claims 7-8 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein the system provides a plurality of views (modes, screens, etc.) through which the user can interact with the project information and further that the system comprises:

- inputting (entering, submitting, providing, etc.) a duration wherein the duration includes a duration (time period, time, length, amount, etc.) and an indication that the duration is an estimate (forecast, unknown, unconfirmed, unsure, uncertain, etc.; “Users can indicate that the duration of a given task is tentative by simply entering the duration followed by a “?” and return to the task at a later time to enter a confirmed duration.”, Row 11, Page 4; “Estimated Durations”, Page 24);
- storing in memory the duration (“Database Performance”, Page 30-31; “The schema change from Microsoft Project 98 to Microsoft Project 2000”, Figure 37); and
- displaying the duration and the estimated flag (mark, icon, etc.; “...quick visual scan for question marks in the duration column.”, Paragraph 1, Page 24; Figure 10, Task/Activity 34).

MS Project 2000 PEG teaches separating (parsing, tokenizing, etc.) the entered (inputted, submitted, etc.) duration strings inherently with its ability accept user input (entered duration) in the form of strings (e.g. 3d, 3mo?, 3 month; Page 24) that the system/method then parses (separates) in order to identify, store and display the individual project task duration parameters entered.

MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches the utilization of well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of

Art Unit: 3623

project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Paragraph 2, Page 21; Figure 8) and other project data via dialog windows (i.e. that inherently open and closed based on user input; Figures 8, 11-12, 15, 17) and/or sheet windows (sheet mode; Figures 9-10, 13-14, 16, 20-21, 26a) containing text fields, radio buttons (typically representing Boolean values/parameters), checkboxes, flags (Paragraph 1, Page 23), pull-down menus and the like.

MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach that the estimated duration includes display type or a flag for indicating if the estimated duration character is to be displayed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean logic (variables, expressions, etc.) to “flag” information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well known. More specifically it is old and well known that Boolean variables have only two values true (yes, 1, etc.) or false (no, 0, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.; e.g. if the inputted estimated/tentative duration display flag is true setting the flag to yes) in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Further it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from enabling users to set/control how the estimated project tasks durations are to be displayed (display type) in view of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to customize/optimize the display of estimated project task durations to best suite their needs/preferences.

While MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein users can interact with a plurality of project information utilizing a plurality of views and dialog boxes (Pages 12-14; Figures 19-21) MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach creating copies of the duration and estimated fields as claimed; however, these differences are only found in the non-functional descriptive material and

Art Unit: 3623

are not functionally involved in the steps recited nor do they alter the recited structural elements. The recited method steps would be performed the same regardless of the duplicating/copying of data to other parts of the system. Further, the structural elements remain the same regardless of the duplicating/copying of specific data to other parts of the system. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, see *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994); MPEP 2106.

Regarding Claim 9 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method comprising a plurality of dialog boxes wherein the dialog boxes are used to collect (received) a plurality of user input (Figures 11-12, 19-21). MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches that the plurality of dialog boxes enable users approve (OK button) or cancel (cancel button) the data entered into the dialog boxes inherently saving the enter data if the user approves (OKs) the entered data or not entering the data if the user cancels the dialog box and then closing the dialog box (field, screen, pop-up, window, etc.) once the user has made their choice/selection.

MS Project 2000 PEG does not teach capturing estimated duration data via a dialog box as claimed.

Official notice is taken that capturing information via a dialog box is old and well known in the art as providing a convenient mechanism for prompting users to enter information into a system (software, program, etc.) wherein once the information is entered and approved (OK button) it is entered (stored, saved, retained, duplicated, etc.) into the system for use at a future point in the process (display, edit, report, etc.). Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method, with its ability to collect a plurality of project information via dialog boxes would have benefited from collecting task duration information via a dialog box including the duration, display type and estimated flag in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system being capable of prompting users to enter in the required/necessary project task duration information.

Regarding Claim 10 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein users enter estimated project task duration information that the system inherently (separates) in order to identify, store and display the individual project task duration parameters entered as discussed above.

MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches utilizing well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences wherein users can control if particular information is shown or hidden (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Paragraph 2, Page 21; Figure 8).

MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach that on one of the duration attributes entered by the user includes a display type or estimated flag or subsequently checking (testing, evaluating, etc.) the flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean expressions/logic (flags) to indicate that a desired/required condition is true/false (yes/no, 0/1) wherein the Boolean variables are set, according to the value of the condition (e.g. if (input.EstimatedDuration == "yes") then EstimatedDuration = 1), and then tested in order to evaluate (test, check, verify, validate, confirm, compare, etc.) the Boolean expression (e.g. if (EstimatedDuration) then display.EstimatedDurationCharacter) as part of a control statement within a system/program is old and very well known.

Further official notice is taken that it is old and well known to compare inputs to expected value (e.g. switch statements) as part of a control statement in a system/program wherein upon the receipt of an expected input the system executes a set of desired logic/actions (e.g. setting a value of a variable, branching to another program, etc.) or upon the receipt of unrecognized/unexpected values "catching and throwing" those errors utilizing well-known error handling techniques (tools, methods, approaches, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to flag (mark, indicate,

Art Unit: 3623

etc.) project task durations as estimated or definite (concrete) would have benefited from utilizing well known programming/system development techniques including but not limited to Boolean logic/expressions to implement a flag for indicating if a project task/activity duration is estimated or definite in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system providing a convenient mechanism for internally representing (flagging) estimated durations.

Regarding Claim 11 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein displaying the duration further comprises

- obtaining (accessing, receiving, retrieving, etc.) the duration (value, estimated duration flag; Paragraph 1, Page 24); and
- combining (merging, concatenating, etc.) the duration value and estimated duration flag into a string (text; Row 11, Page 4; Paragraph 1, Page 24).

MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches utilizing well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences wherein users can control if particular information is shown or hidden (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Paragraph 2, Page 21; Figure 8).

MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach enabling users to indicate that the estimate duration character should be displayed or not as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts and/or hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean logic (variables, expressions, etc.) to "flag" information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well known. More specifically it is old and well known that Boolean variables have only two values true (yes, 1, etc.) or false (no, 0, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.; e.g. if the inputted estimated/tentative duration display flag is true setting the flag to yes) in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Further it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project

Art Unit: 3623

2000 PEG would have benefited from enabling users to set/control how the estimated project tasks durations are to be displayed (display type) in view of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to customize/optimize the display of estimated project task durations to best suite their needs/preferences.

Regarding Claim 12 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein displaying the estimated duration value further comprises (Row 11, Page 4; Paragraph 1, Page 24; Figure 10, Element 34):

- adding (concatenating, merging, inserting, etc.) a estimated duration character into a string (text, variable, etc.);
- adding the default (standard) estimated duration character into a string; and
- displaying the duration value using the display type and estimated duration character.

Regarding Claim 13 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches the utilization of well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences wherein users can control if particular information is shown or hidden (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Paragraph 2, Page 21; Figure 8).

MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach enabling users the option of displaying/not displaying the estimated duration character (estimated duration display preference/setting) as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.) in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Regarding Claims 14, 23 and 31 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method further comprising enabling the users to set a preference (setting) wherein new tasks durations have estimated duration characters

Art Unit: 3623

(strings, text, etc.) by default until the user enters duration ("All new tasks are automatically created with estimated durations by default to signal that a duration has not yet been entered.", Paragraph 1, Page 24).

Regarding Claims 15, 22, 30 and 37 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method further comprising enabling users to filter tasks that have estimated duration characters ("Tasks with estimated durations are easily found using the new Tasks With Estimated Durations filter, or by a quick visual scan for question marks in the duration column.", Paragraph 1, Page 24; Figures 10, 17).

Regarding Claims 16, 21, 29 and 36 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method further comprising designating a summary level task, having sub-tasks (child, children etc.; Page 21) wherein the summary tasks provide summaries of the tasks they contain including but not limited to duration (start, finish, etc.; Figures 24-25).

While MS Project 2000 PEG teaches summarizing project activities/tasks durations in roll-up/summary tasks MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach that the summary level task includes an estimated duration (character) if any one of the sub-tasks has an estimated duration (character) as claimed.

Official notice is taken that summarizing project information utilizing roll-up/summary tasks is old and very well known and provide a convenient mechanism for summarizing/displaying at a higher level the pertinent details inherited from the child tasks/activities.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to summarizes project tasks/activities (roll-up) as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from rolling up/summarizes any of a plurality of values, including indicating if the duration is based on (computed from) a estimated duration contained in one of the child tasks/activities in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system providing an accurate depiction/summary of the pertinent information contained in the summarized child/sub tasks.

Regarding Claim 18 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein received data and displayed data are in different formats (e.g. dialog window wherein users check a check box to indicate if they would like to show summary tasks, checking the box will cause the summary level tasks to be displayed in a format other than a checkbox; "Graphical Indicators", Page 17; Figures 15-16, 20).

MS Project PEG does not expressly teach that the received and displayed estimation characters are in different formats as claimed.

Official notice is taken that receiving information in one format and then displaying the same information in another format is old and very well known. For example a user completes a form wherein the users "answers" a plurality of multiple choice questions (radio buttons, check boxes, etc.) and after completing the survey the system restates the users answers using text representing the answers to the questions provided (e.g. form contains a question asking the user if the are over 18 years of age with radio buttons yes and no, the user selects yes and the system displays after the question yes instead of the radio button which the form received as input).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project 2000 PEG would have benefited from using different formats (displays, characters, graphics, icons, colors, etc.) to receive and display the estimated duration character in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling the system to allow users to simply select a checkbox if they wish a project task/activity duration to be an estimated duration.

Regarding Claims 19 and 34 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein the received estimated duration character (indication) represents (symbolizes, indicates, etc.) the uncertainty of a duration string (Row 11, Page 4; Paragraph 1, Page 24).

Regarding Claims 20, 28 and 35 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method wherein the user indicates that a duration (project, task, etc.) is estimated (forecasted, predicted, uncertain, unsure, etc.) or definite (confirmed, certain, set, actual, etc.) as discussed above. MS Project 2000 PEG further teaches that the project management system utilizes a plurality of well known user interface mechanism for collecting information including but not limited to utilizing standard and custom drop-down lists ("Custom Fields: Value Lists", Pages 22-23; Figure 26).

While MS Project 2000 PEG teaches the ability to setup custom field/values enabling users to select/enter a plurality of project information using standard and custom value/down-down lists MS Project 2000 PEG does not expressly teach setting those fields for estimated/definite as claimed.

Official notice is taken that providing a drop-down list to collect user information is old and very well known for providing a simple and efficient mechanism for collecting user input/data (e.g. reducing amount of typing, reduce typographical errors, restrict

Art Unit: 3623

users to entering only specific values true/false, on/off, etc.). Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to collecting a plurality of project information utilizing drop-down/list boxes/fields would have benefited from enabling users to indicate if a project task/activity's duration is estimated or concrete/definite in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system making it easier for users to indicate if a project task/activity duration is an estimate.

Regarding Claims 24 and 32 MS Project 2000 PEG teaches a project management system and method further comprising receiving and storing an indication that a duration is definite (i.e. no question mark; confirmed, not estimated, actual, set, etc.; "confirmed duration", Row 11, Page 4; Paragraph 1, Page 24).

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- Pyron et al., Using Microsoft Project 2000 (September 2000), teaches a project management system and method wherein users enter project task/activity duration information including time period and an indication if the duration is estimated (tentative) and/or concrete definite. Pyron et al. further teach that the project management system enables users to filter, sort, roll-up and hide project tasks.

- Chatfield et al., Microsoft Project 2000 Step by Step (June 2000), teaches a project management system and method wherein users enter task/activity duration information wherein the information includes a duration, time period and flag (tag, mark, etc.) if the duration is an estimate.

- Black, Ron, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Project Management with Microsoft Project 2000 (April 2000), teaches a project management system and method wherein the method/system visually indicates project task durations that are estimated using a character.

- Primavera Project Planner (1999), teaches a project management system and method wherein users enter project task information including duration, time period and uncertainty (risk, ± 2 days, original duration, Monte Carlo simulation). Primavera Project Planner further teaches that the project management system and method enables users to filter task information, enter/display data via a plurality of views (sheets, screens,

Art Unit: 3623

windows, dialog boxes, etc.), roll-up/summarize project tasks/activities and that the system utilizes question marks to represent unknown and/or wildcard values.

- Cummings, Nigel, @Risk for Project Delivers Richer Picture (February 1999), teaches a system and method for managing project (@Risk for Project) wherein the project's duration and other calculations take into account estimated (uncertain, risky, forecasted, etc.) duration estimates and other risk factors.

- Primavera.com – Web Pages (March 2000/June 2000) teaches the commercial availability of a project management system and method (@Risk for Project) that extends Microsoft Project 1998 enabling the combined system/method to account for risks (uncertain durations, costs, etc.) when planning a project.

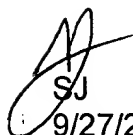
- A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK, 1996), teaches a plurality of old and very well known project management methods (techniques, tools, approaches, etc.) including but not limited to estimating project task/activity durations as an essential process within project planning. PMBOK further teaches simulating (determining) the effects different task durations have on the project schedules as part of a project's risk management strategy.


Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Scott L. Jarrett whose telephone number is (571) 272-7033. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00AM - 5:00PM.

Art Unit: 3623

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hafiz Tariq can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


SJ
9/27/2005


TARIQ R. HAFIZ
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600